

Bilingual Pesticide Labeling Initiative: EPA seeks comment on letter received from Migrant Clinician's Network proposing pesticide labels be required in English and Spanish

In December 2009 the Agency received a letter from the Migrant Clinicians Network, Farmworker Justice, and other farm worker advocates requesting EPA to require labeling in English and Spanish on all pesticide products. EPA is treating this letter as a petition and will take public comment on this request. EPA would like the public to comment on the benefits of requiring labeling in Spanish, as well as the disadvantages and costs associated with requiring labeling in Spanish on pesticide products.

Currently, the Agency will allow a pesticide registrant to add labeling in languages other than English for marketing purposes as addressed in Pesticide Registration Notice 98-10. For pesticide products subject to the agricultural Worker Protection Standard (WPS)(40 CFR Part 170), EPA requires that certain portions of the pesticide label contain words or phrases in Spanish.

A recently published U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey report, *Language Use in the United States: 2007*, found that of the 281.0 million people in the United States aged 5 and over, 34.5 million people speak Spanish at home. For comparison, the second foreign language most spoken in the home was Chinese, with 2.5 million speakers. Data from the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) show that many agricultural handlers (agricultural employees responsible for mixing, loading, and applying pesticides) have limited ability to read English. Fifty-three percent of handlers reported their dominant language was Spanish. Thirteen percent of handlers whose dominant language was Spanish read English "well," and 87% of handlers whose dominant language is Spanish reported that they read English "not at all," "a little," or "somewhat." Besides agricultural handlers, lawn and garden workers, cleaning staff, and the general public regularly apply pesticides on the job or in the home.

If EPA were to institute a bilingual labeling requirement, the Agency must identify the appropriate scope of such a requirement. In order to do this, it will consider what would be the most effective for improving safety while minimizing the burden to industry and the enforcement community. This could range from requiring bilingual labels for certain types of pesticides, to certain parts of the label, to the entire label of all pesticide products.

EPA anticipates publishing this Notice in the Federal Register in early 2011 and would welcome your comments on MCN's proposal. Specifically, comments from agricultural workers and people regularly exposed to pesticides, members of the pesticide and agricultural industries, and members of the enforcement community would be appreciated.